

The President's Daily Brief

9 September 1972



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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

9 September 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Israel is retaliating for the Munich massacre with bombing raids on fedayeen installations in Syria and Lebanon. (Page 1)

The battle for Quang Tri City in South Vietnam may soon intensify. (Page 2)

Disorders in Phnom Penh have shaken the Cambodian Government's stability, while on the military front, the situation has worsened after the Communists again cut a portion of Route 1. (Page 3)

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In northern Laos, one of the four government task forces is advancing toward its objective near the Plaine des Jarres. (Page 4)

In Chile

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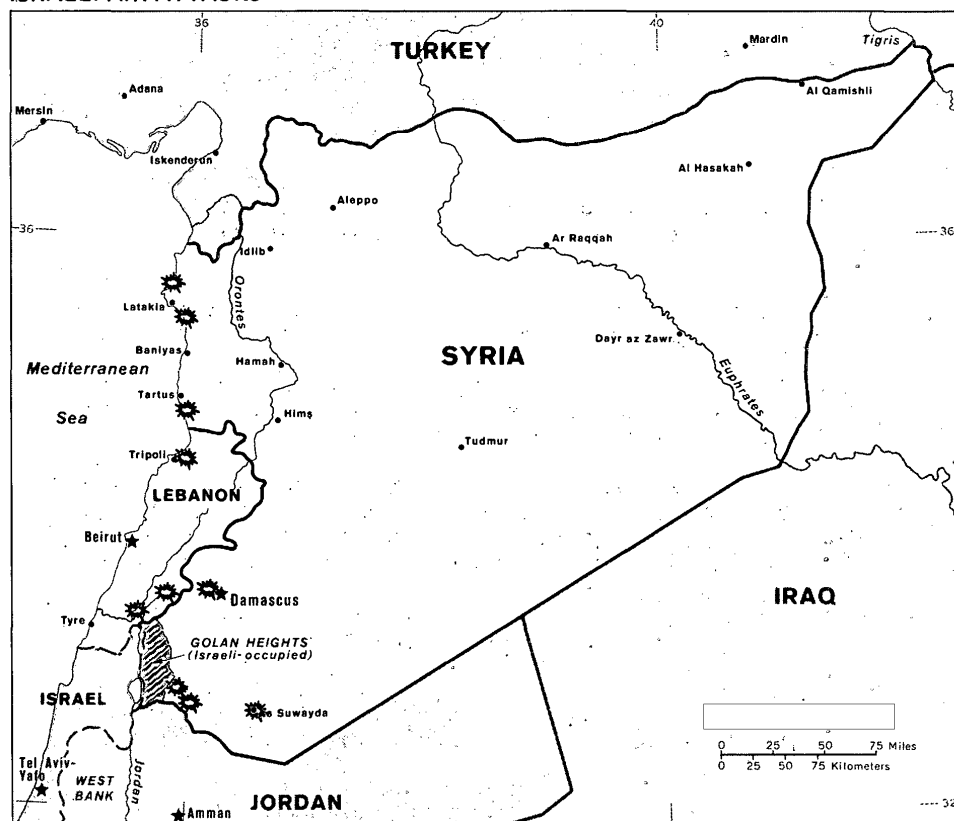
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(Page 5)

The Soviets have sent their first unofficial contact to Seoul in response to importuning from the South Korean Government. (Page 6)

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ISRAELI AIR ATTACKS



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ISRAEL - ARAB STATES

Israeli retaliation for the murder of its athletes in Munich has so far consisted of air raids against fedayeen installations in Lebanon and Syria. Yesterday, strikes were launched in two waves against guerrilla encampments, headquarters, training camps, logistics sites, and marine bases. The first wave, yesterday morning, hit three locations in Lebanon and seven in Syria. The second, in the late afternoon and evening, was directed at targets in southern Syria, one of which had been hit earlier.

Damage appears to be extensive and casualties may be high. An Israeli official has claimed that Palestinian refugee camps were not targets, but some strikes were in the vicinity of such encampments.

[redacted] presumably in an effort to counter Lebanese claims of casualties among the refugees.

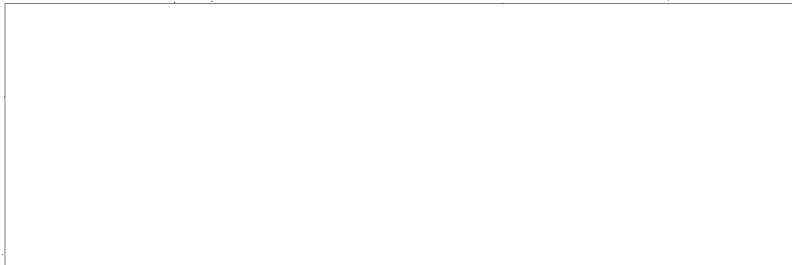
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As dawn broke today over the area, at least 18 Israeli aircraft were noted flying over Lebanon and Syria, while others patrolled along the borders. Syrian antiaircraft gunners fired on the border patrols, but in turn came under fire from gunners on the Israeli Golan Heights.

Additional Israeli attacks are expected by at least some fedayeen units.

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Furthermore, the statement issued by Israeli Foreign Minister Eban shortly before the raids yesterday explicitly warned that Israel would "take all necessary measures to strike at the perpetrators of the murders" and would "fight the terrorists wherever we find them." Other Israeli officials have said that governments willing to host the fedayeen must bear a responsibility for the guerrillas' actions. These statements strongly suggest that additional reprisals are in the offing. Syria may be singled out because the Israelis believe some of the terrorists who were involved in Munich either lived or trained there.

*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***SOUTH VIETNAM**

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[redacted] three Ranger battalions recently moved from the Delta to participate in a major effort to retake Quang Tri City, including the citadel, by 16 September. The Rangers [redacted] support six Marine battalions, who will try to overwhelm the Communist defenders in a massive, lightning assault. The government operation is to be accompanied by a diversionary thrust into Communist-held territory north of the city. [redacted]

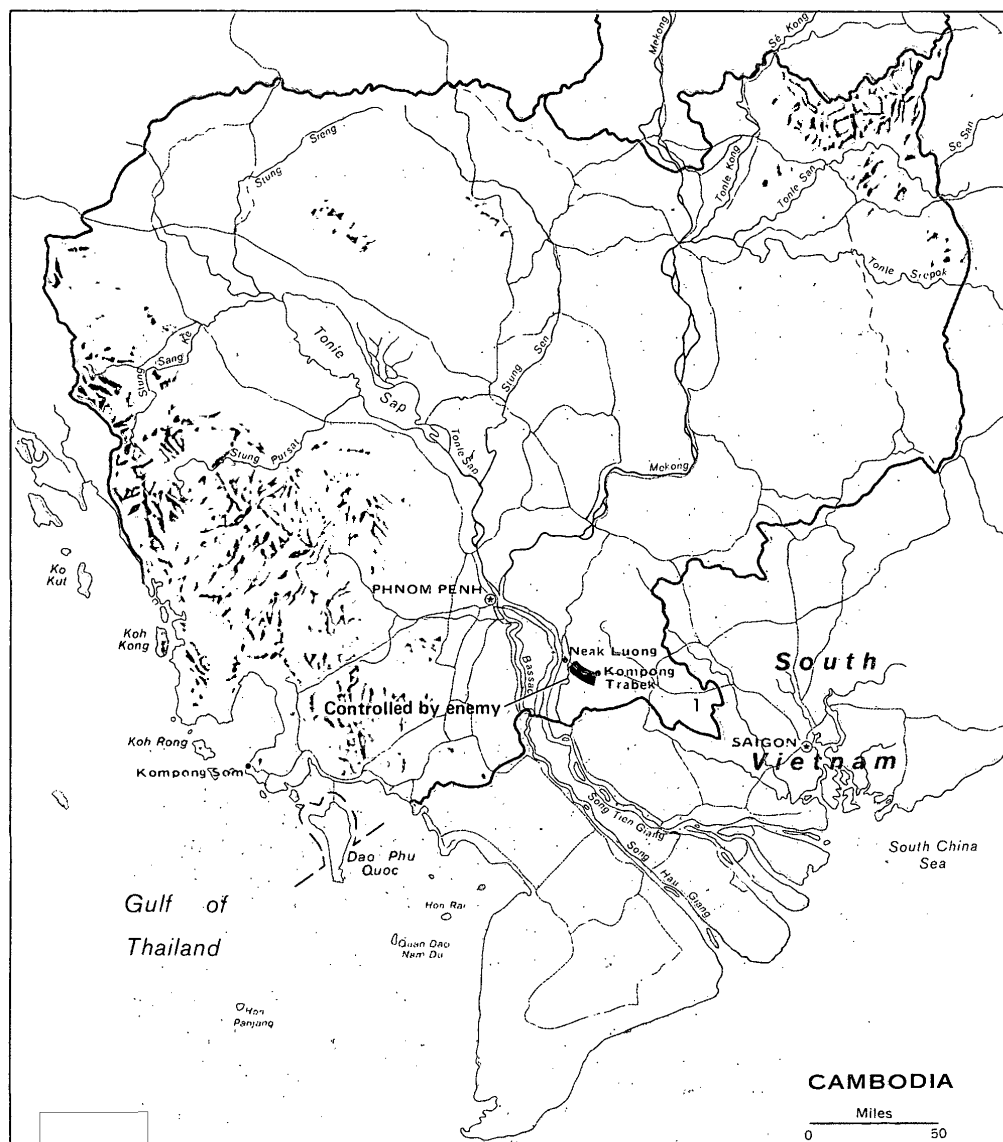
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South of the city, government Airborne troops have yet to eliminate completely a series of enemy strongpoints that dominate the route that must be taken by government elements moving toward the citadel. The Airborne's efforts have been frustrated by heavy shelling and recently by increasing Communist ground attacks on their positions. Meanwhile, US pilots have spotted several T-54 tanks in the area. All three regiments of the recently infiltrated North Vietnamese 312th Division have now been identified south of Quang Tri City, confirming other indications that this relatively fresh unit is replacing the enemy's 304th Division.

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CAMBODIA

Disorders in Phnom Penh have shaken the government's stability. Yesterday roving bands of undisciplined army troops, including personnel from elite paratroop units, engaged in widespread looting in the capital. This followed a day when soldiers seeking cheap rice had raided shops, markets, and warehouses--the government had ordered them to "inspect" shops to ensure that merchants were selling rice at the new officially set prices. The police did not try to interfere with the looters, and some supervised and even joined in the looting. There are no reports of serious violence, and the disorders were confined to the commercial sections of the city.

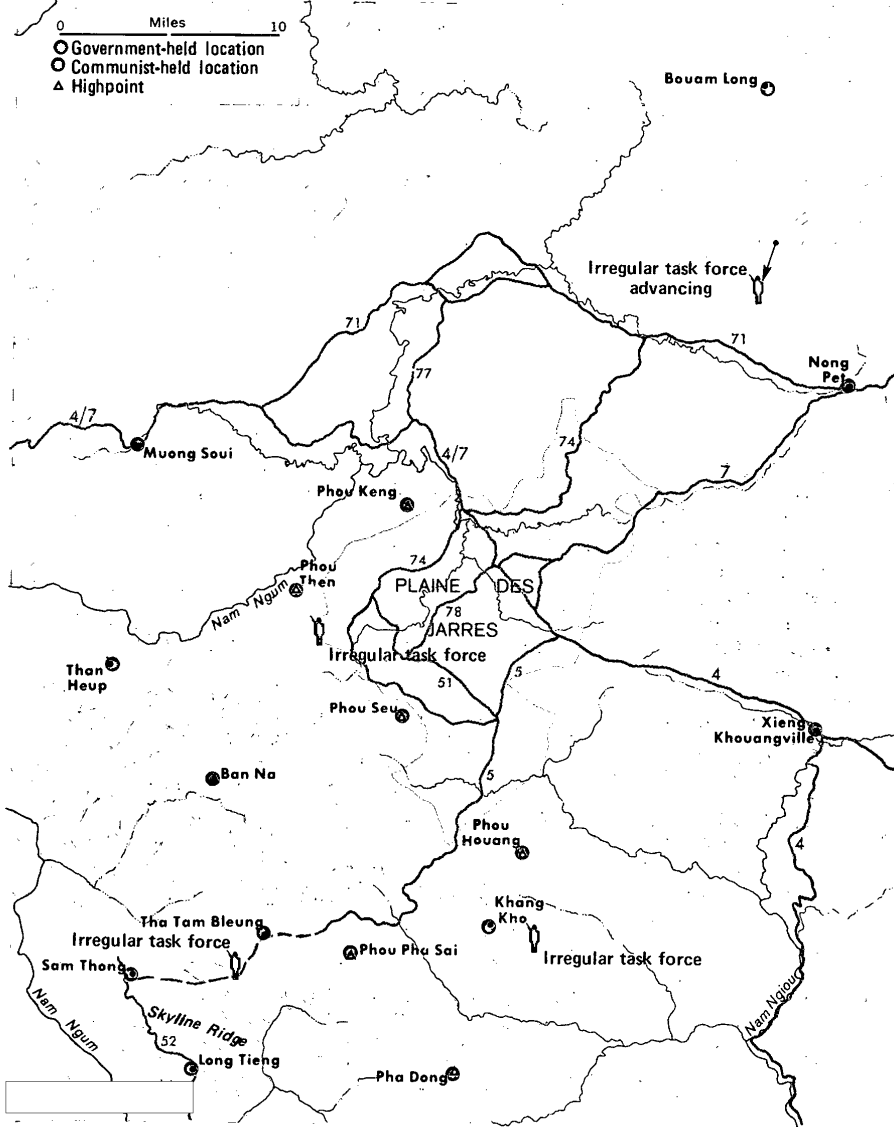
Late yesterday President Lon Nol made a radio speech in which he promised summary executions of those caught in subsequent acts of thievery. He also promised a limited airlift of rice from Battambang and announced that the government is soliciting rice supplies from abroad. He later told US Embassy officials that the government's operation to clear Route 5 leading to Battambang finally would be launched this weekend.

The looting is a dramatic manifestation of the unrest that gradually has been building up throughout the army. Many officers and troops have become increasingly upset by extensive military corruption, by the lack of direction and support for tactical operations, by the rising cost of living, and now by the rice crisis. If Lon Nol does not deal more energetically with these grievances, he risks losing control over the military--which represents his main source of political support.

The government also continues to fare badly on the battlefield. Communist forces, striking again at government positions along Route 1, have now gained control over a ten-mile section of that highway between Neak Luong and Kompong Trabek. Once again the town's defenders are isolated.

Given the situation in Phnom Penh and the army's past performance along Route 1, we doubt that the road can be reopened unless South Vietnamese forces return to help.

LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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LAOS

Only one of the four remaining government task forces is moving toward its objective near the Plaine des Jarres. This force, which six days ago had withdrawn a short distance after strong Communist attacks, on 7 September advanced to positions about five miles northwest of Nong Pet, the junction of vital Communist supply lines to the Plaine des Jarres. Intercepted enemy messages indicate that elements of the North Vietnamese 335th and 866th regiments, which last week scattered another task force north of the Plaine, are moving toward Nong Pet to meet the advancing irregulars.

The remnants of the irregular task force that was dispersed north of the Plaine on 30 August have been withdrawn to Long Tieng, where they will be regrouped. Thus far, about one third of the members of this unit have returned to government lines. The task forces west, southwest, and southeast of the Plaine have clashed sporadically with the Communists in the past few days, maneuvering into better defensive positions rather than making any effort to move toward the Plaine. Intercepts suggest that these groups will soon come under heavier enemy pressure. Low morale and sickness continue to trouble government forces.

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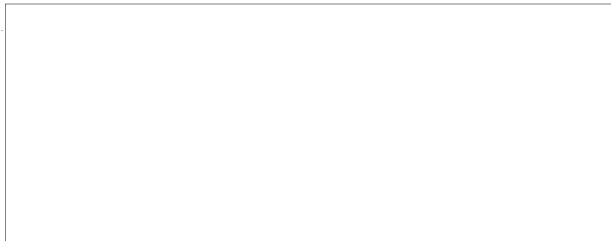
CHILE



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In the continuing political maneuvering, President Allende has acted to relieve workers from the effects of recent steep price rises. This week his government decreed a tax-free bonus to public and private employees and to pensioners as well. The decree also provides for a wage increase in October equal to the cost-of-living rise for the first nine months of 1972. By this action, Allende has moved ahead of the opposition's attempt to legislate a pay raise.

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SOUTH KOREA - USSR

Victor Louis, a Soviet journalist who in the past has acted as an unofficial contact man for Moscow, has arrived in Seoul, ostensibly to cover the North-South Red Cross talks opening on 13 September. For more than a year, the South Koreans have been trying to establish a direct contact with Moscow, but the Soviets have been unresponsive.

Louis' visit suggests that the Soviets have decided to explore such contacts, perhaps to encourage Seoul's more independent foreign policy efforts. The initial Soviet reluctance to encourage the South Koreans may have been the result of North Korean objections that have since been reversed.

The Soviets no doubt wish to get a first-hand assessment of the new Korean situation.

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Louis presumably is charged with assessing developments in the South. Meanwhile, in Pyongyang, Konstantin Katushev, the Soviet party Central Committee secretary responsible for dealing with ruling Communist parties, is holding the first discussions with the North Koreans at this level in over a year.

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NOTES

USSR-Egypt:

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

China:

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

East Germany - West Germany: The East Germans have agreed to release about 1,000 children who have long been separated from their parents in West Germany.

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[REDACTED]

East Germany's concession on this emotional issue will be of political help to Chancellor Brandt, and Pankow may make other small moves of this kind as the West German electoral campaign gathers steam.

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